

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 22, 2021

Governor Tony Evers
115 East State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Governor Evers:

The past fifteen months have been challenging for families, teachers, and school district officials. Closed schools have led to a spike in failing grades and have set back students statewide.¹ We recognize that you have urged districts to offer extended summer school to ensure these losses are not permanent. However, we ask that you keep parents at the center of the long-term recovery process by creating a public, transparent database identifying how schools spend their billions in federal relief dollars.

Through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, Wisconsin has received an unprecedented \$2.4 billion boost in federal funding.² These dollars are intended to provide schools with emergency support in light of the pandemic, but some districts are treating them like a lottery windfall instead. Milwaukee Public Schools, for example, has proposed spending more on carpet and locker replacement than on direct academic services like tutoring and extended school time.³ Families deserve to know how schools are making up for so much time lost in the classroom.

In order to promote transparency and accountability, we ask that your office and the Department of Public Instruction create a publicly accessible database showing each school district's ESSER budget. This information should already be available to state officials by way of the budgets that districts submit online to WISEgrants.⁴ To ease accessibility, the new database should group line items into three categories: academic progress, physical and mental health, and facilities. The database should be intuitive, searchable, and offered in multiple languages.

¹ Kati Anderson, "GBAPSD Looks to Address Failing Grades as Virtual Learning Continues," WBAY-TV, December 9, 2020, <https://www.wbay.com/2020/12/10/gbapsd-looks-to-address-failing-grades-as-virtual-learning-continues>; Ben Jordan, "MPS Says 30% of High School Students Failed Fall Semester, 11.5% Increase from Last Year," WTMJ-TV, March 24, 2021, <https://www.tmj4.com/news/coronavirus/mps-says-30-of-high-school-students-failed-fall-semester-11-5-increase-from-last-year>; B.C. Kowalski, "How Wausau's District Compares with Others in Central Wisconsin," *Wausau City Pages*, February 8, 2021, <https://www.thecitypages.com/how-wausau-s-district-compares-with-others-in-central-wiscon>.

² Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "ESSER I, II, and III Overview," March 25, 2021, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u1yT2773jefCdKgSrJKGLxBzmJ3Cfjhc1KgzaaViA6Y>.

³ Milwaukee Public Schools Office of Finance, "Elementary and Secondary Emergency Education Relief Fund II Budget Detail," May 25, 2021, <https://milwaukeepublic.ic-board.com/attachments/ccd87c53-bc43-4f81-a9c5-75961432405f.pdf>.

⁴ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "ESSER Funds (I, II, and III) Guidance on Public Allowable Costs," April 21, 2021, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1K78BQsDluMQ0aDTzd0Qb1gQKmLXVhfRYkBzXm6S3bCY>.

As the scale of the learning loss faced by Wisconsin students becomes clear in the months ahead, Wisconsinites deserve to know how their government and school leaders are utilizing resources to support their children. While smart investments could help get our students back on track, inefficient use could further set back hundreds of thousands of children, particularly among our most vulnerable populations. We ask that you support full transparency so that families can demand more from their schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "AG", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

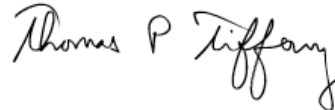
Mike Gallagher
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Glenn Grothman" in a cursive style.

Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "B. Steil" in a cursive style.

Bryan Steil
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas P. Tiffany" in a cursive style.

Tom Tiffany
Member of Congress